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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - Los Angeles Demonstrations -  
Israeli Elections - Belarus

PARIS - Monday, March 27, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

Los Angeles - Demonstrations  
Israeli Elections  
Belarus

(B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

The issue of PM Villepin's controversial employment measure continues to dominate headlines in the weekend and Monday press. Left of center Le Monde's Sunday front page read: "Villepin's Intransigence Lets the Street Do the Talking." Adding to the continuing conflict over the CPE is the real risk that the under-privileged suburbs will flare up again. Weekly Sunday right of center paper Le Journal du Dimanche's editorial wonders: "Who will come out as the winner in this interminable conflict?"

Private TF-1 television reported on Sunday the "surprisingly" large mobilization of Hispanics in California and Arizona to protest a new federal law making its way through the House significantly increasing penalties and prison time for clandestine immigration to the U.S. Right of center Le Figaro on Monday devotes a half page to the "Immigration Battle That Has Fired Up Los Angeles." "Never, even during the height of the Vietnam war had Los Angeles seen a demonstration of this scope." The estimates are about 500,000 protestors. (See Part C)

Right of center Le Figaro reports that a "Franco-Egyptian" debate exists over the January 3, 2004 crash that claimed the lives of 148 people, 134 of whom were French. The French investigators are contesting the findings of their Egyptian counterparts. The Egyptian investigators blame the crash on technical problems thereby blaming Boeing. The French investigators contend that the crash was due to the Egyptian Flash Airlines pilot falling asleep.

For La Croix "Israelis are Unenthusiastically Going to Vote."  
(See Part C)

Left of Center Liberation on Saturday reported the government crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations in Belarus. Liberation's correspondent was briefly detained by the police and released only when French diplomats intervened. Right of Center Le Figaro on Saturday reported the EU's decision to implement sanctions on Belarus. The EU will "take restrictive measures against those who are politically and administratively responsible for violations" of human rights, "including President Loukachenko," announced the Austrians, currently head of the EU. The White House spokesman, Le Figaro notes, announced that Washington "would react in unison with Brussels." The editorial in right of center Le Figaro on Monday by Pierre Rousselin suggests that: "the legislative elections yesterday held in Ukraine prove that the Orange Revolution was not waged for nothing." (See Part C)

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

Los Angeles - Demonstrations

"Immigration Peoples the American Streets"  
Washington correspondent for left-of-center Liberation writes (03/27): "It is by way of huge demonstrations in several cities, including a record 500,000 people in L.A., that on Saturday Hispanics in the U.S. opened the debate that the American political circles had always taken pains to carefully delay until now."

Israeli Elections

"The Sharon Heritage at the Heart of the Elections"  
Jerusalem correspondent in Catholic La Croix (03/27): "Ehoud

Olmert is not well-liked by the general public but with the discreet support of Washington he is beginning to look more and more like a statesman."

#### "The Abbas Scenario"

Bernard Guetta on state-run France Inter radio commented this morning (03/27): "The most likely scenario. is that the elections will lead Israel to unilaterally redefine its boundaries after having withdrawn from a large part of the West Bank. The 'separation' scenario may be the most likely, but there remains a glimmer of hope that true, negotiated peace that is acceptable to both sides may come about in the next few months. Mahmoud Abbas says that he is convinced that a definitive settlement to the crisis is possible within a year. He proposes to negotiate with the Israelis and the Americans. thereby by-passing the government formed by Hamas. But Hamas may find that the idea of negotiations is a good one. There failure would not be theirs and their success would enable Hamas to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the international community without having to be officially recognized by Israel first. What Abbas is proposing is a return to the Clinton plan, the one that Yasser Arafat had refused and that triggered the second Intifada."

#### Belarus

##### "The Ukrainian Way"

"What is taking place in Belarus is completely the opposite of what is happening in its neighbor Ukraine. In Minsk freedom is scorned by a regime that refuses transparency and openness. If Europe, for its part, supports the opposition in Belarus, the repression of the regime will lead to what it is trying to quell: democracy. The battle is just beginning. Ukraine like Belarus cannot escape their geographical situation. They are trapped between two worlds, torn between strengthening ties with Europe while not posing a threat to Russian interests. They must at once stand up to pressure from Moscow without having too many illusions as to the West's 'good intentions.'"

STAPLETON